

Storytelling with Jim Weiss Transcript of Episode 381

Julie Walker: Hello, and welcome to the Arts of Language Podcast with Andrew Pudewa, founder of the Institute for Excellence in Writing or as many like to say, “IEW.” My name is Julie Walker, and I’m honored to serve Andrew and IEW as the chief marketing officer. Our goal is to equip teachers and teaching parents with methods and materials, which will aid them in training their students to become confident and competent communicators and thinkers.

Julie Walker: So Andrew, a few weeks ago, we did a podcast on things to do over summer vacation to help with evaporation, as you call it.

Andrew Pudewa: Right, and keep kids writing and engaged and stimulate their imaginations and do something other than mindlessly stare at screens and play games and scroll.

Julie Walker: It's so true. It's so true. Well, and one of the suggestions that you had was maybe the kids could write a little script for a video and do a whole project over the summer of just creating a play and recording it and then showing it to, oh, I guess that puts 'em on a screen again, but in a more creative way.

Andrew Pudewa: No, I mean there's, there's a whole kind of skill that exists in that idea of getting a story and putting it into a drama or a

Julie Walker: Yeah.

Andrew Pudewa: storytelling form or sometimes a, a poetic form or a pantomime form. I mean, there's a lot of ways that people have told stories in the past and you know, kids pretty much love to do that, especially if they feel free to use a preexisting story.

Julie Walker: Right

Andrew Pudewa: You know, they don't have to think of something completely original.

Julie Walker: Exactly, well, and of course, what immediately came to my mind when we recorded that, and I'm so excited to have on our podcast today, a guest of someone who can do that in such a way, when I listen to him tell a story, Andrew, I feel like he is telling it just to me, he's not reading a story. He is telling me a story. And of course we're talking about Jim Weiss.

Andrew Pudewa: Yes, THE master storyteller of the age. No one even comes close to Jim Weiss.

Julie Walker: So welcome to our podcast, Jim.

Jim Weiss: Now I have to really be good. The pressure's on after what you just said.

Andrew Pudewa: No, you just have to be yourself.

Jim Weiss: Yeah, I know. I mean, that's actually one of, one of the good things about it is that you're supposed to do this in your own way. You be your own self doing it. So Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: We met many, many years ago. I would say decades.

Jim Weiss: yeah

Andrew Pudewa: I am guessing it had to be back in 99, 2000, somewhere in that zone. We were at a convention, I think it was Florida, but I'm not even sure. And we were neighbors in the exhibit hall

Jim Weiss: right

Andrew Pudewa: and I had my little daughter who was young at the time, Morielle, she's now a mom of six homeschooling in Pennsylvania and we had got some of Greathall cassette tapes somehow, and when I realized that you were the producer, the creator of those, I was so excited to meet you. Do you remember our first meeting at all?

Jim Weiss: We've had so. Many meetings at so many conferences through the years that I'm not sure that the very first one stands out. I, I, I have very distinctive and detailed memories to some of our conversations through the years, and I can picture this. uh, One of my favorite memories, and I've been doing this for about 35 years now, professionally, uh, all over the world, you know, telling stories and teaching. And one of my very favorite memories is of being at a conference where you also were speaking and you were with, one of, you were with your son at your booth before the, uh, great public came in and you were demonstrating to him something that needed to be done at the booth. But the way in which you did it was instead of just laying down and do this, do this, do this, you work, you were working it out with him.

And so respectfully of, of who he was and of his speed and his ability to do this and not quite do that, that, um, I just stood there quietly and watched. It was, to me, it was one of the great examples of parenting that I've seen. And, uh, if I hadn't already been your friend, I would've wanted to be your friend after that, you know,

Andrew Pudewa: You're so sweet.

Jim Weiss: and I, I think, I think that that attitude or that approach is something common to us. And probably one of the reasons you and I have been and have stayed friends is, um, our desire to really treat, uh, our listeners or readers respectfully and give them the tools to kind of do things their own way. Using, using things we could teach them. But they, you know, everybody does these things slightly differently, and I'm not here to try and make somebody come out as a clone of how I do it. I'm just here to offer some tools and some experience, I guess.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. One of the things that uh, I know, you know, I started to teach really consistently in the early Os was the extraordinary importance of hearing good language, appropriately sophisticated vocabulary, a variety of sentence and syntax structures, and kind of some literary language. If, if you don't get it into the brain, primarily through the ears at a young

age it's very hard to get someone to write with a higher level of language, and so I, I would like to think that I helped your business in telling everybody, there's two things you have to do, read out loud to your kids and get great audio recordings of books and stories, and I'd always mention my friend Jim Weiss.

So now, you know we don't see each other as often. You're still at it though. You're still telling stories and teaching people how to do storytelling. Give us a, a short little bit of how did you get into this? I mean, I don't think when you were, you know, 14 years old and said, what do I wanna be when I grow up? You would've come up with professional storyteller and audio producer, but what, what was it that kind of got you to the point where you thought, I can do this and make a life out of it?

Jim Weiss: Absolute necessity. I was, uh, I was in the business world and I had the classic midlife crisis. I came home one day, age 40, and said to my wife, Randy, I don't wanna do anymore what I've been doing. And, uh, I had gotten to a point, I, I'm about to use a word I never use in my vocabulary, hate. I, I had gotten to the point where I really hated what I was doing and I, I said to her, I just don't want to do this anymore.

And after she pulled herself up off the floor, she said, what else would you do? And I said, I can tell stories. I had been a teacher. Randy was a teacher with National Awards, so that ran strongly in our family. I had used stories in the classroom and I had told stories to our daughter, and I had been blessed to grow up in a family of people who loved to read aloud to us or tell us stories.

My mother read aloud. My father told us the classics from history and literature in his own words. And he instinctively knew without having any training in it, a few of the very few rules of the game, cuz I think there aren't a lot of absolute rules to how you do this, but there are a few. And to me the two unbreakable rules are, first of all, you only tell a story or read a story aloud that you love yourself because if you don't, it's gonna fall flat. So why bother?

And the other. And there's so many stories out there you do love. And if you start to tell one of those, you've got about an 80% chance right away just going into the process that whoever it is you're sharing a story with is gonna pick up on your enthusiasm and like the story too, maybe for different reasons, but they'll get into it also.

So the first rule is only tell a story you love and that's what dad did. And um, the second thing is, before you begin, to perform, or in my case, sometimes to record a particular story, you always ask yourself this question, to whom am I telling this? Because you can tell the same story a lot of different ways depending on who it is that's out there listening.

I can tell one of the Greek myths the same story differently to a three year old, an eight year old, a 15 year old. And a, a 40 year old, and it'll be the same basic story in characters and incidents, but I'll tell it differently. The vocabulary may be different. I may find that for a younger audience, there are some details I have to kind of explain as I go that I wouldn't have to do even when I tell my version of the Tortoise and the Hare, which you've heard me do, Andrew, um, and the T o r t o i s e s p e a k s r e a l l y s l o w l y, but the hare, he talks fast. he talks fast like this. He even laughs fast and he runs around and he goes here and he goes there and he goes over

and he reads three books, cover covers. zoom what? The Hare? Well, I won't tell that story if I know that the audience for whom I'm performing is made up to a great extent of English as second language people. Cause hare speaks too fast for somebody who is learning English. So that's a consideration.

So dad translated these stories in a way he held onto the essence of the story. He held onto the essence of the characters, but he told it on a level two boys could understand and then, I'll tell you this, this'll take 30 seconds, but it's worth it, I think. One of the things he tended to do was to have the book itself nearby. I remember him telling us *The Three Musketeers* over the course of maybe four nights, and when he was done, I said, wow, that is the greatest thing I ever heard! And he said, well, I'm glad you like it. Because when I first read it, I was up till three in the morning under the covers with a flashlight. Cuz once you start with Alexandre Dumas, you cannot stop till you've read the last word. That's how great he is. He just hooks you in and keeps you there. And he said, and the other thing, uh, um, is that if you like the way you just heard me tell it honey, wait till you read Dumas' version. It's a hundred times better.

Well Andrew, that sent me off to improve my reading cuz dad, there's the book right there. And every few months for the next couple of years, I would take that book down to see if I was ready to read it yet. And finally one night or one day, I, I pulled it down and I said, I can read this thing now. I'm good enough to understand. And I went right upstairs with that book and it.

Andrew Pudewa: And got your flashlight and kept reading it all night.

Jim Weiss: At 1:30 in the morning, my father came into my room and I was sitting up reading a book and he said, it's a school night. What are you doing? And I held the book up and when he saw which book it was, I'll never forget this, he got this wonderful little smile and he said, have a good night. And he left.

Andrew Pudewa: Ah.

Jim Weiss: finished the book that night. The next day I went to the public library and checked out a biography of the villain in *The Three Musketeers*, the historical figure, Cardinal Richelieu, who was Prime Minister at the time, and who was the arch villain in *The Three Musketeers*. I wanted to see if he really was who Dumas said he was, and right there is is one of the primary lessons of what you teach and what I teach, which is the literature and the history reinforce one another.

Andrew Pudewa: Hmm. That is such, there's so much there. I, I would comment on the first thing. I don't wanna forget to tell you this. I recently listened to a biography of Alexandre Dumas' father, and it's called *The Black Count*, and it is the most amazing biography. I, I won't take time to tell you all about it, but I know you would just find it absolutely fascinating and

part of what was so interesting is how it was events in his life that kind of filtered their way into *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Christo* and Dumas' writing. And, uh, I know you love that book. The second thing I see we have in common is parents who read to us.

Jim Weiss: Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: and, and, uh, in my case, I don't think my parents were quite at the point of retelling stories, but they made a point of reading broadly, and in that same way, inspiring me to pick up, uh, books that I wanted to, you know, read more of that kind of thing. And, and also poetry. My parents loved poetry and would read poetry to us. And, and so, uh, both of us grew up to be in, in a different way, but, wordsmiths and lovers of language and literature and so that underscores, I think for our listeners, the incredible important value of just carving time out of the busy life to read and tell stories and learn to love story and language with children when they're young and when, when they're in that very impressionable age.

Jim Weiss: I think, I think there's an element also beyond that, and that, that alone would be more than enough to justify what we're, what we're trying to get people to do. Um, because you know, and I know and, and any parent knows that if you can get your child just passionate to learn, then we're gonna have to run as fast as we can, just trying to keep up with them. So it's, it's inspiring them not only the particular story, which, and I should digress from my own digression here. I've been doing this long enough to have people come, have had people come up to me and say, Mr. Weiss, um, because of your recording on, on seven grade scientists, *Galileo and the Stargazers*, I am now a scientist that turned me on to science. And I'm able to say to that person, well, three of those scientists turned each other on. Archimedes, the Greek, father of seven sciences, Galileo became a scientist, partly because you as a boy, he read the story of Archimedes and said, that's what I want to do. And he finished a lot of Archimedes work, but he couldn't explain why it worked the way it did. But the year Galileo died, Newton was born in England, and as a boy, he in turn read Galileo's life. And being the great theoretical thinker, Newton was able to explain as an adult why the princip, what the principles were, why the science worked as it did. So, over the course of wow, about 22 centuries, you have these three people linked together by story, inspired by each other's stories. And Einstein, in turn, by the way, had a framed picture of Newton on his desk at Princeton University when he was working there. So part of what happens here is the content of a particular story, but part of it is just introducing to a listener or a reader, all of these different people who were fascinated by this field or that field or that field, because you don't know which of those stories is gonna be the one that turns on that light bulb of imagination over the head of your son or your daughter. And so I try to tell stories of painters and sculptors and architects and um, mathematicians and, you know, everything I can think of, poets ,writers because it inspires people to find the thing they love and try for it. So there's a whole additional major element there.

Andrew Pudewa: There's a CS Lewis quote. I'm not gonna get it precise, but to paraphrase, he said something like reason or intellect, reason is the natural order of truth, but imagination is the organ of meaning. And that idea of the organ, you know, the organ in the body, that, that keeps us alive, that changes the nutrients into the energy that we need, the the organ that processes everything to our, to our health and our benefit. And imagination, I think is so much like that. And I fear that with our modern entertainment, uh, there's so little imagination left to the child. I, I have grandchildren who don't watch a whole lot of stuff on screens. Their parents are very conservative that way. And I was talking with the eight year old and, and, uh, we were comparing a movie and a book. And she said, the book is, the audio book is so much better than the movie. And I said, why? And she goes, well, you can just see so much more stuff. Something

like that. And I thought, wow, that is beautiful. Because yes, a movie shows us, but in a limited scope, whereas the, the audio, the story, the sound, it, it frees the imagination to explore more detail. And I think you've, you've been such a blessing to so many. I mean, all my children grew up with your, your recorded stories and now their children are growing up with your recorded stories and I just think you will never know until maybe someday when afterlife you can look out and see everything that resulted from your work, how many children's imaginations were peaked in that same way that, uh, Archimedes, Galileo and Newton, you know, inspired each other.

Jim Weiss: I frequently use this, this image of we're all in the business of throwing pebbles into ponds, and you see that the ripples start out in all those directions, but you're not gonna see every one of them hitting the banks, the shores, but they're hitting some shore. And, you know, uh, if a parent or grandparent reads aloud or tells stories and get, and the, and the child gets turned onto it. If you are really blessed, and I know you've been blessed this way, Andrew and I have too now. If you're really blessed, you'll live long enough to see your own child starting to read aloud or tell those stories to her or his child,

Andrew Pudewa: yeah

Jim Weiss: and you'll know that you are part of this chain, this great connected chain of story. And, and not only a, a story, but I especially have always tried to tell stories from all around the world and from different times in history because, and, and we need this right now more than at any time in, in my lifetime. We need to know one another's stories because there is so much, there's so much going on in anger right now where people are not listening to one another and conversing with one another. They're just shouting and closing their own ears. And when you learn somebody else's story, you learn who that person is in a fashion that you couldn't otherwise learn it. And once somebody is no longer a quote unquote them, to me, not just a member of some group that I think I know when it's an individual or when even the group's deep seated beliefs and mores start to make sense to me, whether I adopt them or not, they start to make sense. It's harder for me to hate those people.

Andrew Pudewa: And part of that is having shared stories. You know, for a long time I think almost all Americans knew many of these legends and myths and Bible stories and folk tales and fairytales and, and more. And we could we could kind of all relate to those stories and apply them to situations in life. And that was a great benefit. And I think sadly, you know, we've lost that common repertoire of story literacy and that's, that hasn't been helpful at all.

Jim Weiss: Oh, if we get it, we get what in our household we refer to as the dreaded Hollywood treatment. You know, sometimes, sometimes somebody makes a movie *To Kill A Mockingbird* is a great example. That's a great movie from a great book. Most of the time, as, as you mentioned earlier, the movie doesn't necessarily hold up and you're letting somebody else provide the images. Your, was it your granddaughter, um, mentioned, and in fact the brain scientists over the last 15 to 20 years, have identified two entirely different, physically different parts of the human brain. One of which kicks in when we are hearing a story and filling in the visuals in our own imagination, reading it, hearing it, whatever. Versus the part of the brain that kicks in when somebody gives us the visual on a movie screen or a TV screen, or a computer or a phone screen, they're two different parts of the brain. They are used ultimately in two different kinds of creative

thinking, and you have to develop both of them if you're gonna have access to those different styles of creative thinking later on.

They're both valuable. They're both necessary and, um, kids are not getting learning skills right now. Everything is very visual and I have nothing against, uh, seeing a good movie, but I if you can be filling this stuff in yourself, you carry it with you in a whole other way. I just put out recently an unabridged reading of *The Wizard of Oz*, which several people have said to me, they think is the best thing I've ever done. It has so many voices and there's so much content that's not in the marvelous classic movie. Uh, and I love the movie, but the book has just oodles of other stuff and. It becomes a much richer experience. So I don't say stop watching the movie, but I say read the book or listen to the, the reading of it if you really want to get it.

And, and let me add one more quick thing here and then we can move on here, I think, if we need to. If you want to double, and I, I don't, this is not exaggerating. If you want to double the impact of what you're teaching to a child, teach through story and then at the end. Ask the child, do you think she did the right thing? Why? Or what else might he have done? Why? Now, if you finish a story and you see the child is just transported, you know, on that magic carpet of story, don't pop the bubble. Don't say, "what have we learned from all this?" You know, let that one go. Let them just stay in that wonderful mood. But most of the time you can get into a discussion about the ethical element.

Andrew Pudewa: Yep. Should, should someone have done what they did and why? That's kind of a, a very classical type of Socratic question. That is so helpful. All right. We need to ask you, uh, some tips for young people who would like to either write scripts and create little plays or dramas or tell stories from scripts or children who would like, or adults who would like to practice their own storytelling skills. So, you know, give us your top tips for doing what you do, either as a young person or as an older person.

Jim Weiss: Sure. The first two are the ones that I already mentioned as the unbreakable rules. Pick, pick material that really resonates with you, and secondly, perhaps ultimately, think about to whom do I wanna tell this? Okay. I have, and I think you're gonna put this up for your podcast listeners, I developed what I call my recipe for a story.

This is my version of the structure that almost every story in the world follows. And you can find variations on this. I know you have one of your own, um, probably the best known is Joseph Campbell's, the, the great teacher of mythology in the 20th century, but Joseph Campbell's because, because he was looking at myths there are a few elements in his that I don't I don't necessarily go along with as brilliant as he was and as valuable as his uh, list may be.

You know that his story has a beginning and a middle and an end. And for me, what drives the story is the character. If you think about a favorite story you have, whether you read it or saw it, saw it on a screen or whatever. Probably part of what hooks you into it and makes that one of your favorites is that you feel like you're right inside that main character looking out. You are so identify with the main character or characters. So part of what's important is to let us know who that character is. In the beginning of a story, you're gonna introduce your character or characters and let us know something about that character. You can either tell us, Cinderella was intelligent,

beautiful, had a warm, loving heart and a marvelous sense of humor, and just loved to hang out with mice. Fairytale people are weird, man. Anyway. Or you can show Cinderella being these things and we're smart enough to figure out, oh, okay, this is who it is, but we have to know that special thing because that's what she or he, depending on the character. What the character is going to use to solve problems later on,.

You could put Hercules or put Sherlock Holmes into the same challenging situation, and Hercules is going to use his muscles and Sherlock Holmes is going to use his brains and his ability to, to uh, follow through deductive thinking. So we need to know what it is about the character, so we're prepared for that.

Secondly, we need to know when and where this story is happening. If it's a modern story, you don't have to say, "One Monday morning in the year 2024 in Tulsa, Oklahoma." You can, but usually it can just give us a clue such as "Frank had just turned off his computer when", or "Ellen was just backing the car out when," and I know it's a modern story cuz there's a computer or a, or a car.

If it's a different time or place, you have to tell us because if you don't give us some clues, We're gonna ask halfway through, why didn't they get that information off the web? And you're gonna have to say, oh, I forgot this happened in the year 1160. So you can either say William took, uh, his sword and shield down from the rack and went down to practice swordsmanship of the other squires in the castle. Or you can say one day in the air, 1160 in a castle in England. If they are, if the listener already knows about the medieval world, you can do the one that's just full of clues and that's enough. If they don't know the Middle Ages, you have to say it's 1160 in a castle in England. So who are my characters?

What's distinctive? When and where is this happening? And then something comes along that, oh, and you have to decide who's telling the story. Is it a narrator, an all-knowing narrator? Is it one of the characters? Is it back and forth between several of the characters? The easiest is a narrator cuz the narrator knows what everybody knows at all times. The hardest is the one jumping back and forth, but you get to decide and one story, you may decide to be a narrator, and the next one you may decide, I'll tell this as one of the characters. So at this point, something happens to push that character into the main action. Um, what starts the journey is my phrase for this.

Somebody says to Sherlock Holmes, somebody has stolen the queen's diamond and you have to get it back. We've already met Holmes and we, and we now know he's a detective who solves it, really challenging mysteries. Now he's going to use this. Or somebody says to Hercules, "a dragon has come to our island and you're our only hope. Won't you try to help us?" And Hercules is on his way. We're now into the middle of this story and in which essentially two things happen over and over. First of all, a helper appears, that's my term for it. And the helper says, I'm gonna give the main character some clues. I'm gonna tell Hercules about the dragon so Hercules can figure out what weapons he'll need to fight a fire breathing dragon.

Or I'm gonna tell Sherlock Holmes the first few clues and let him go on from there. Sometimes the helper appears just that once. Sometimes, like let's say Glenda, the Good Witch in the Wizard

of Oz, or um, Gandolph the Wizard in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Sometimes the character will reappear throughout, but every time Gandolph appears, it's to help the real hero, Frodo, on his mission. Gandolph. That's Gandalf's mission, is to help Frodo on his mission, cuz the whole world depends on its succeeding.

Andrew Pudewa: And is that part of the beginning in your alignment or?

Jim Weiss: No, we're now in the middle. I It can, it can be that thing that starts the person into the, the hero or heroine into the story. I mean the helper could be the person who says to Hercules, we need you to come fight this dragon, and then goes on to tell about the dragon. Or it could be two separate people. Now the character is in the middle of the story and the story, the middle of it is a series of challenges. Sherlock Holmes trying to gather the correct clues.

Andrew Pudewa: And there can be any number of obstacles, right?

Jim Weiss: Oh yeah

Andrew Pudewa: Um, I mean, some go on and on and on and on. Uh, whereas some are pretty short and one or two or three problems to be solved. I always like that fairytale format. You know, first thing doesn't work, second thing doesn't work. Oh, third time's a charm. You know, there's kind of an expectation I guess, that is created for, um, you know, try, try again. You will get there.

Jim Weiss: And, and when you're as we call it mapping the story. You can either put it in an outline form or another way to do it that refers back to what you just said, Andrew. Um, I know one person who draws a road and puts a stick figure, the main character at one end, and draws a pot of gold. The, the gold the character is after, at the other end. And then in preparing the story, every time there's a challenge or an opportunity that changes things. This particular teller draws a hurdle or a fence across that road and under it rights must get gown for the ball.

Andrew Pudewa: I can see how that would be real helpful to kids

Jim Weiss: That way you, yeah, you've got it all in one visual right there. Another person I know draws a mountain and each time one of those things happens draws a little sub peak partway up the mountain until he reaches the very tip top, which is gonna be the biggest challenge. And in fiction, the biggest challenge is usually the last or the second to the last. If you got rid of the wicked witch of the west in the first 10 minutes of the *Wizard of Oz*, nothing else would be as exciting or thrilling afterwards. So you're building up to that in a real history story it's not always that clean, but in fiction, almost always it is.

So you're building up. Getting the, the factors you need until you're ready to confront the main problem. I call this the, the turning point. The Hercules says, okay, I know what I need to do to fight this dragon. I've now gathered the weapons. Sherlock Holmes says, I've got all the clues, and suddenly they've fallen in place. Now I'll reveal the answer. Thrusting us all into the ending of the story. The moment of aha when Hercules fights the dragon, and we go, aha. Now I see

why he needed these unusual weapons to fight a dragon. Or, now I see what all those clues Sherlock Holmes is gathering really meant. He just explained it to me.

All that's left after that is to find out what happens to all the characters as a result of this revelation or these changes of circumstances, and if there is a moral, this is where you can include it. Now, you don't always have to say the moral if, if you insist on it. Here's one of my tips. If you absolutely want to tell what the moral is, don't do it yourself. Don't be Andrew Pudewa. Don't be Julie. Don't be Jim saying, "and the moral is. . .," let one of the characters say it. Let the tortoise tell the hare. After winning the upset victory in the race, let the tortoise tell the hare. "Let that be a lesson to you hare. Slow and steady wins the race."

Julie Walker: Yeah. But of course in your tortoise voice,

Andrew Pudewa: yes, in the tortoise voice. I've heard that the original Aesop's fables didn't have explicitly articulated morals. That that was more of a modern invention in the last couple hundred years, maybe. Um, you know, in the old days people thought everyone would be smart enough to think about it and conclude something, and now we think people are too stupid to do that, so we have to tell them.

Jim Weiss: Yeah. The other element of that is that Aesop told his fables. He was, at the time, he told them he was a slave. It's one of the reasons he told, I'm sure that he told animal stories because he probably didn't wanna risk telling a story about human characters and having his owners, his masters say, are you talking about us? And there he is a slave. He's in trouble. But if he couches everything in the language of a tortoise or a hare, or an eagle or a fox or the wind or something, he could get away with it.

Andrew Pudewa: He wouldn't, uh, offend people kinda like the memes of the day, I guess.

Jim Weiss: Well, it's like slaves before the Civil War singing spirituals about Moses leading the Israelites to freedom. Well, what they were really saying was, somebody lead me to freedom, but they didn't dare to say that.

Andrew Pudewa: Right. Well, we could go on and on and on. I have just a few last questions for you. This has been so good, and I would like for number one, our listeners to know exactly where they can get any or all of your fantastically beautifully well done stories. They're all available on audio. And then I'd like to know two things.

Number one, how many stories do you think you have recorded in the year, the decades you've been doing this? And, and here's a totally unfair question, but you have to answer it. Of all the stories you ever told, what is your absolute most favorite?

Jim Weiss: Okay. First, if you want to, uh, find the recordings, my website is jimweiss.com. That's j i m w e i s s, all lowercase. All one word. jimweiss.com, and you can click on where it says [recordings](#) and find all of the recordings somewhat generically grouped by suggested ages. You can find also a link saying recordings Timeline and that organizes his stories by when they happened in history. Whether they're history stories, or classic literature set in each of these eras.

So if you're studying the Renaissance, let's say, you can go right to the stories that take place during the Renaissance. There is another listing that shows them all their stories, organizes them by what virtues or values they exemplify. So if you're trying to teach about generosity or something, you'll know exactly which stories on which recordings. So that's jimweiss.com.

Second, through our own company and through our publisher, [Well-Trained Mind Press](#), which which sells 'em all, there are probably 70 recordings, but if you counted all the ones I've done for other publishers through the years unabridged readings of books, it's well over a hundred recordings. Some of them are 60 minutes long, and some of them are hours and hours long. The ones on my website are pretty much my own recordings. I don't know how many individual stories, but, but my wife will sometimes on occasion say to me in some distress, sweetheart, how is it you can carry six or eight hundred stories around in your head? You never forget a story, and yet you never remember where you put down your car keys.

Andrew Pudewa: Yes,

Jim Weiss: It's all under priorities. So I'm not sure, but um, I have literally told I. One of the five or six oldest written stories on earth from Mesopotamia, and one of my collections, and this one was a story about dragons. And I've told stories up to and through the 20th century and into the beginning of this century, and from all around the world, and the stories have gone all around the world. I, I remember going to New Zealand on tour, literally halfway around the world from where I lived and having people say, Oh yeah we've been listening to you for 20 years and that's mind boggling, you know? But it's heartening because now they know the classics.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. Okay. Last question. Of all the stories ever.

Jim Weiss: I'm, I'm not evading honestly, Andrew. I could get it down to probably half a dozen.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay.

Jim Weiss: I'll tell you, I'll tell you this though, I'll answer it. If you give me about one minute, I'll give you, I'll, I'll give you a dual answer. Years ago, our daughter was home from university on break and I was in the middle of recording a an album, and she said, "Dad, when are you going to record *Theseus And The Minotaur*? That was always one of your favorite stories. And when you used to tell me stories, that was one of my favorites." And I said, "Sweetheart, every year, I think this is the year to record *Theseus* and every year as I'm preparing it, some detail, it hadn't really seemed all that significant, suddenly pushes its way to the top and I suddenly realize, wait a minute, that changes these three other relationships, these four other factors. I can't tell it yet till I've had time to figure that out. And every year something new presents itself." And she said, and I think with great wisdom, "Dad, This is one of the stories that is one of your own personal teaching and learning tiles. One of the stories you consult when you're trying to figure things out, you are never going to be done with this one. If you wait till you're done, you'll never record it" And the next day I went into the studio and I recorded *Theseus*, no script. I did it two, two times. And the second time I said, that's it. So that's one of the favorites.

And the other story I'll tell you, it takes all the 30 seconds, but it is my favorite story. Although it's not classically a story, it's an anecdote. I was very close to my grandparents and after I left the Chicago area to move to California, I used to talk to my grandmother. My dad's mother every weekend and one day we were talking about the family, and she was a very wise woman. She was not an intellectual, but she had profound wisdom about life, practical wisdom. And we were talking about the family, and she suddenly asked me a question no one else has ever asked me. She said, "Honey, would you like me to tell you the secret of life?" Somebody asks you that every day, right? Julie? You know,

Julie Walker: Yes.

Jim Weiss: Oh yeah, absolutely. She was the only person I knew at the time I thought might actually be able to, to do it. So I very quiet very quietly cuz I didn't wanna disrupt her. I her thinking, I said, yeah, what do you think it is?

She said, well, it doesn't have anything to do with money over a certain, somewhat minimal level. She said, your grandfather and I made and lost two fortunes and I have now outlived my husband and both my sons. She had outlived my father and my uncle, and she said, I give back every penny I had for one more day with them.

It's not the money. She said. "It has to do with three things. You have to find someone you really love, who loves you for who you are and not for what they wanna turn you into. You have to find that person you love. Second, you have to find something you love to do. And do it. And the third thing is you need to find a place that feels like home, that feels like a good place for you, a good fit. And you need to go to that place with that person and do that thing you love. And if you do those three things, I guarantee you will lead a happy life." And then she paused and said to me, "and I just saved you 40 years."

Andrew Pudewa: And it, it's funny because that wisdom is what's embedded in so many stories.

Jim Weiss: yeah, yeah

Andrew Pudewa: Well, Jim, this has been fantastic. I thank you so much for joining us. I look forward to the next time we bump into each other, either intentionally or accidentally. And if you're, if you're ever in Tulsa, Oklahoma, you've gotta come by and we can sit down in person and record or record another episode, uh, for this podcast. And I hope that you're able to keep doing what you're doing, uh, for 20, 30, 40 more years. The, the sky's the limit.

Jim Weiss: As long as God gives, continues to gimme the voice and the breath. Andrew, keep doing this. And the same to you. And, and the invitation holds on my end too, for you or for Julie and to come if you're anywhere near Tucson. I appreciate so much the work that you will all do at IEW and, and we're, we're coming at the same things from just slightly different angles, but there's so much overlap and for the best of reasons I think, and I, I want to just say to the listeners here, last clue. As you're making a script or telling or performing a story or anything else, don't try for perfection. Try for doing the best you can on any given day because perfection is overrated and it'll only give you a migraine to try for IT.

Andrew Pudewa: So true, so true.

Jim Weiss: Just go for showing What matters to you in that story in emphasizing that and and sharing the love and the light that is in that story and in your heart. Thank you for sharing your days with ME.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, thank you Jim, and give our best our love to Randy.

Jim Weiss: and your family.

Julie Walker: Well, let me just say one last little thing to our listeners. We have put in our show notes, so please, if you don't get over to our show notes, please make this be that exception. Go over to our show notes. We have a few surprises for you compliments of Jim Weiss and the work that he's doing.

Andrew Pudewa: Some stories.

Julie Walker: Yes, definitely. Thank you, Jim.

Jim Weiss: Thank you Julie. Yeah, there's some very useful and I hope entertaining things that'll be there in the notes for you too.

Julie Walker: Okay, sounds great. Thank you.

Julie Walker: Thanks so much for joining us. If you enjoyed this episode and want to hear more, please subscribe to our podcast in iTunes, Google podcasts, Stitcher, or Spotify. Or just visit us each week at IEW.com/podcast. Here you can also find show notes and relevant links from today's broadcast. One last thing: would you mind going to iTunes to rate and review our podcast? This really helps other smart, caring listeners like you find us. Thanks so much.